Capstone: Build Your Financial Future

A culminating project that connects every unit: career, budget, banking, credit, car, housing, insurance, investing, and retirement.

Unit 10: Retirement & Inflation **5–8 class periods (or a 2–3 week project)**

Individual (with peer review)

Name(s) _____ Period ___ Due _____

Introduction

This capstone asks you to build a complete, realistic 10-year financial plan for a fictional version of your future self. You will choose a career pathway, build a budget, plan for transportation and housing, protect yourself with insurance, manage credit, and start investing for the future — then defend your plan in a final presentation.

> You are 18. Pick (or draw) a career pathway from the provided list, research its typical earnings, and plan years 18–28. All data you use should be fictional or from public, general sources — no real personal financial information.

Learning goals

- Integrate income, budgeting, banking, credit, borrowing, housing, insurance, investing, and retirement decisions.
- Use accurate calculations with stated assumptions.
- Evaluate tradeoffs across goals.
- Communicate a coherent plan.

Supporting documents and data

Pathway menu (fictional starting points)

Pathway	Training cost	Training time	Starting pay (est.)
Electrician apprenticeship	$3,000	4 yrs (paid ~$38,000/yr)	$62,000
Dental hygienist (AAS)	$24,000	2 yrs	$70,000
Accountant (BA)	$88,000 net	4 yrs	$60,000
Registered nurse (BSN)	$80,000 net	4 yrs	$78,000

Pathway	Training cost	Training time	Starting pay (est.)
Logistics coordinator (certificate)	$6,000	1 yr	$48,000
Graphic designer (BA)	$70,000 net	4 yrs	$52,000

Required plan sections

Section	Units used
Career & paycheck	1
Monthly budget (year 1 and year 5)	2
Banking & emergency fund	3
Credit plan	4
Transportation decision	5
Housing decision (rent now; rent or buy at 28?)	7
Insurance plan	8
Education cost & loans	9
Investing & retirement start	6, 10

Tasks

Task 1: Career and paycheck

1. Choose a pathway; compute education cost, loans, and payments.
2. Compute net pay at your first full-time job.

Deliverable: Career page.

Task 2: Budget

1. Build a first-year monthly budget with cash flow ≥ $0 and savings ≥ 10%.
2. Build a year-5 budget with a raise and inflation.

Deliverable: Two budgets.

Task 3: Protect and borrow wisely

1. Choose bank accounts and an emergency-fund target and timeline.
2. Choose a transportation option using total cost of ownership.
3. Write a credit plan (card choice, utilization goal, payoff rule).
4. Choose insurance coverage and deductibles.

Deliverable: Banking, transportation, credit, and insurance pages.

Task 4: Grow

1. Set a retirement contribution (capture any match) and project it to 67 in today’s dollars.
2. Decide whether to rent or buy at 28; justify with numbers.

Deliverable: Investing/retirement and housing pages.

Task 5: Defend your plan

1. Present your plan in 6–8 minutes.
2. Respond to two “life happens” events chosen by the class.

Deliverable: Presentation + plan portfolio.

Reflection

1. Which decision had the largest long-term effect?

2. Where did goals conflict, and how did you prioritize?

3. What will you do differently in real life because of this course?

Submission checklist

- ☐ Career page
- ☐ Two budgets
- ☐ Banking, transportation, credit, insurance pages

- ☐ Investing/retirement and housing pages
- ☐ Presentation
- ☐ Reflection

Scoring rubric

Category (points)	Exemplary (100%)	Proficient (~80%)	Developing (~60%)	Beginning (~30%)
Financial understanding (20)	Correctly applies concepts from every unit and explains how decisions interact.	Mostly accurate explanations with minor vocabulary gaps.	Partial understanding; some concepts misapplied.	Little evidence of understanding.
Mathematical accuracy (25)	All calculations correct, labeled, and rounded appropriately; work is shown.	1–2 minor errors that do not change conclusions.	Several errors or missing work.	Calculations largely missing or incorrect.
Analysis & comparison (20)	Shows tradeoffs among sections and tests at least two “life happens” events.	Compares options with small gaps.	Comparison superficial or uneven.	Little analysis.
Justification (15)	Recommendation is supported by specific numbers and weighs non-financial factors and risks.	Mostly supported.	Mostly opinion.	No justification.
Communication & presentation (10)	Clear, organized, well-labeled tables, charts, and writing.	Minor clarity issues.	Hard to follow in places.	Disorganized.
Completion (10)	Every checklist item complete.	One item missing.	Two or three items missing.	Most items missing.

Total: 100 points. Alternative recommendations earn full credit when supported by accurate evidence.

ALL PEOPLE, BUSINESSES, PLACES, AND NUMBERS IN THIS PROJECT ARE FICTIONAL. RATES AND COSTS ARE ILLUSTRATIVE ASSUMPTIONS.